



Benrud Reader (Iris Othrow editor)

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# Benrud Reader

“BENRUD-HERITAGE”

www.benrudfamily.org

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Number 20

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Continued pp 2

## Memories

by Iris Othrow

When I am in the process of putting together the Benrud Reader, I often ask myself, “Why are you doing this.” And then I remember:

All my wonderful aunts, uncles and cousins and the time I spent with them as a child. How loved and important they made me feel. How welcoming and full of caring and forgiveness they were for a child's foolish ways. We had such fun and felt so important doing things on the farm. The responsibilities and what one might call work we rarely rebelled against doing. We drove the tractor, fed chickens, picked up and cleaned eggs, hoed in the garden, worked in tobacco fields, shucked corn, picked beans or peas, dug potatoes, learned to cook and can, to clean and do laundry, we watched the slaughter of animals for food and prayed and laughed at delicious meals. One of the most fun things was going to town and making a special stop for ice cream or candy, and maybe catching the free outdoor movie. And most important, the church community events. I remember one time getting dressed up to go with my Grandmother, Minnie Benrud to a women's aide meeting. We stood together looking in the vanity mirror in her bedroom as she pinned the hat pin in her hat. I remember saying to her, “Even if we're fat we look good when we get dressed up.” I was probably six or seven at the time. She chuckled as she hugged me and said, “Yes, we sure do.” I enjoyed singing the hymns, chatting with my grandmother's friends and running around with my cousins and the other children at these events. How priceless it is to have this history of relationship and learning from family! To be able to offer your own family some of this history and give them a connection to a part of their roots is why this family maintains reunions every five years. It's why this newsletter is important and appreciated by so many of us with a Benrud ancestor. People come and go in our lives. Those of us who know the love of parents, grandparents and extended family are Blessed. That's what the Benruds gave us. That's why we carry on to give this love to future generations. So...

## Mark Your Calendars!

Plan to attend the 2015 Benrud Reunion

Honoring Our Roots

July 31, August 1 and 2

Reunion headquarters will again be

The Days Hotel in La Crosse, WI

And update your family's information (see form on insert)

(VERNA) KIM HUNTER ILLING  
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**In This Issue**  
Pp 1 Officers and Directors  
Memories  
2015 Reunion Information  
Pp 2 Historian's Corner  
Benrud Vision and Mission  
Olava's Song  
Benrud Family Website  
Pp 3-5 Families in the News  
Mt Pisgah and its Neighbors  
Pp 6 Benrud Silent Auction  
New Display-Benrud Chapel  
Pp 7 Letter-Palmer A Peterson, MD  
Pp 8 Updates Needed

Your Benrud Board wishes you a  
Happy and Blessed New Year!  
We are working hard to plan an enjoyable  
and interesting reunion for you  
July 31, August 1 and 2, 2015.  
The theme will be Honoring Our Roots  
The reunion will again be held in the La  
Crosse, WI area with our main headquarters  
at the Days Hotel.

*Officers and Directors*  
**Continued from pp 1**  
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**Historian's Corner-Written History**

We have a family book that was compiled by Jon Olson and includes the wedding photos of Peder and Sofie's children and grandchildren. These pictures are also available on our web site <http://benrudfamily.org/> Now we would like to compile the next generation's wedding pictures. Please submit your family's pictures to Marie Marin. You can mail a clear copy to her at 9030 Blumenstein Road, Woodruff, WI 54568 or scan and e-mail to mcpmdcm65@yahoo.com. Please include names and other pertinent information. You can also send this information to the assistant historian for your branch.

**Benrud Vision Statement**

The members of the Benrud Family foster traditions of family, heritage, and culture.

**Benrud Mission Statement**

The Benrud Family will provide opportunities for members to maintain contact with one another, to learn about the culture common to all of them, and to gather in celebration of their family heritage.

**Olava's Song**

Do you remember at the 2010 reunion during the evening dinner program, how Hans Peterson entertained us in true country music style singing his original lyrics? Hans, in a most charming way, told the life story of Olava Benrud Lee (1856 – 1943). Her experience was similar to that of millions – so poor, eager, devout and hardworking, who left their homelands to forge a better life for themselves in America.

My brother and I believe that this inspiring musical tribute to our pioneering ancestors should be preserved and enjoyed by everyone. So, we are pleased to announce that a professionally produced CD of “Olava's Song” along with other songs by Hans Peterson and an accompanying trio will be available at our 2015 reunion. Watch for more information.

*Dorothy Andersen Twesme and  
Roger William Andersen*

**Benrud Family Website**

Dan Kobler has launched our new benrud family website. He has added content and pictures as he has received them. Please send him news and pictures from reunions at [dan@dakobler.com](mailto:dan@dakobler.com). Check it out at <http://benrudfamily.org/>

**See the New Display in the Benrud Chapel**

The Benrud Little White Chapel at Norskedalen is available to tour or visit by advance appointment. **Please call ahead if you would like to pick up keys to the interior 608-452-3424.**

Here you can see the “Old Books” display in the display cases in the chapel. You will see a 1744 Norwegian Bible, books used by pioneer pastors, confirmation students, Psalm Books, and hymnals.

Norskedalen is located off La Crosse County Highway PI, just 3 miles north of Coon Valley, WI. For directions, please check their website for further information [www.norskedalen.org](http://www.norskedalen.org).



The following letter was written by Palmer A Peterson, MD before his death in 2012.



September 24, 2010

Dear Julie, Board Members, and all the Benruds, Norskedalen Board, Curt & Tammy,

I want to express my sincere thanks to all of you for whatever you did to support and contribute to the Benrud Memorial Chapel Fund. Our parents, grandparents, & great-grandparents must be very proud.

For many, many years I had thought we should do this tribute, so when Julie sent me the photo of the completed chapel, tears came to my every. I admit to being a sentimental person. We can all be very proud of our forbearers and try to live up to their courage, their honesty, thriftiness, hard work, and especially their God-fearing character.

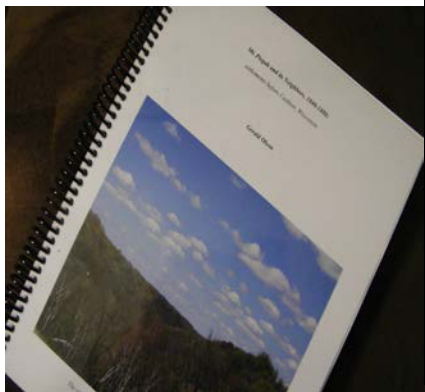
Here is wishing all of you well, and Godspeed.

Sincerely,

Palmer A Peterson, MD

Olava Branch





**Mt. Pisgah and its Neighbors, 1840-1880**  
**Settlements before Cashton Wisconsin**

Jerry Olson (Maren Family) recently has completed a book about the early days of Mt. Pisgah and Hazen's place, before Cashton and Westby were founded. The book traces the development of this location in southwest-central Wisconsin from earliest pioneer days to the laying of the Sparta to Viroqua railroad spur in late 1879. Entitled "Mt. Pisgah and its Neighbors, 1840-1880; settlements before Cashton, Wisconsin" it addresses some of the earliest regional settlers in the Monroe and Vernon county townships of Portland, Christiana, Clinton, and Jefferson, and the issues they faced.

The book is filled with pictures from the larger region as it discusses early settlements in Coon Prairie, Lovaas Valley, Newry, Bloomingdale, Brush Creek, St. Mary's Ridge, Melvina, Pine Hollow, Portland Centre, West Portland, Hazen's place, and the elusive Mt. Pisgah Post Office as it moved north and south along the old Black River trail. The Benrud family arrived in this area following these "first conditions" as described in the Mt. Pisgah area.

On sale for Benrud Family members, Mt. Pisgah and its Neighbors, 1840-1880," can be purchased for \$30 by sending check or cash to Gerald Olson, 8302 Red Granite road, Madison, WI 53719. Please include the address to which the book should be sent.

**We Need Everyone's Help for the 2015 Benrud Silent Auction!**

It is not too early to start thinking about the Reunion Silent Auction. This event is our primary moneymaker and is SO important to the continued success of the reunion. We use it to help meet our many reunion expenses but especially the costs of the annual newsletter sent to everyone whose address is in our family tree data bank. (Be sure to update or remind relatives to update their addresses.)

Start thinking of items now that you can bring or make for this event. You could make a pie, lefse, cookies, a quilt, towels, woodcraft, jewelry, or whatever craft you do. Get your kids involved and contribute their projects, too. Some examples are: make a no sew quilt or other favorite craft, or frame a piece of their art work. And the list goes on – scarves, rosemaling, ceramics, drawing or a painting. Perhaps you can start collecting something special from your state or province or maybe your job has some nice items to donate. Consider bringing a basket created for a child, a wine basket with cheese, items from a favorite team or a unique basket of your own creation (this is also a great way to get your family involved).

If you've never participated in a silent auction, it's great fun. You just put your name and bid on the accompanying sheet and then another person may come along and bid higher but you can then bid over them. The highest bid gets the item when the auction closes on Saturday night of the reunion.

Have fun creating....Diane Piper, silent auction reunion chair

**Message From the Editor** I am sorry that this newsletter is three months late. I had some technical problems and then everyday living just took up my time. Anyway, I am looking for someone in the family who would like to take over as editor of this newsletter The Benrud Reader. Please contact me if you are interested. You can reach me at [irisothrow@aol.com](mailto:irisothrow@aol.com). I have enjoyed doing this newsletter, learning more about the Benruds but the time has come for me to turn this over to someone else. Usually things run smoothly, family members send in articles, and if you have the technology experience and equipment it is a pretty straight forward. You will enjoy it, as I have. Please let me know if you are interested. I will be happy to assist if needed.

Branch directors or other board members write **FAMILIES IN THE NEWS**. Send your family news to your branch director listed on this page or Iris Othrow (address on page 1) by July 1, 2013 to be included in the next Benrud Reader. Include births, deaths, graduations, honors, weddings and special events. Please note we have added **Men and Women Serving in the Military**. **No one sent me names for this so look for it in the next edition**. Pictures are always welcome.

**FAMILIES IN THE NEWS**  
**CANADIAN**

Beth Brandon Olson from Outlook, Saskatchewan, Canada passed away on September 1, 2013. She is survived by her children Gaylene (Grant), and Douglas (Jill) and five grandchildren.

**MAREN BRANCH**

**LENA BRANCH**



Verlynne Kern, and Leonard Olson celebrated their sister Marilyn Kroeze's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday.



Nora Parker Mesle, was born 8/26/2012 in Chicago to proud parents Abbey and Mark Mesle. ~~Abbey is the daughter of Manita and Bryan Murphy.~~

**ANTON BRANCH**



Taylor Lang in Bergen.

Taylor is a student at the University of Minnesota and is studying in Bergen, Norway this semester. Taylor is the daughter of Jeff and Maren Lang of Menasha, WI.



Allen Moore, age 73 of rural Westby, died Thursday, December 20, 2012. In addition to his wife, Carol, Allen is survived by three children, Kristi (Dennis) Pennel of Sparta, Mark (Mari) Moore of Westby, and Jamey (Laura) Moore of West Salem; 10 grandchildren.



Verna P. Christensen-Olson  
Mar. 18, 1916-Nov. 22, 2013

Verna is survived by her children David, Sue (Richard) Sujecki, John (Cheryl) and Victor, 10 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. Her husbands' Maurice Christensen, Glen Olson and daughter Sonia Burton preceded her.



Anton Branch (Continued)



Martha V. Moore, 97 of Westby, passed away Dec. 26, 2012 at Vernon Manor in Viroqua. Martha was born to Martin and Sophie (Anderson) Benrud of Cashton on December 9, 1915.

Martha married William H. Moore on Oct. 10, 1935. She is survived by her daughter Sharon (Loren) Olson, eleven grandchildren and 16 great-grandchildren.

OLAVA BRANCH

Roger W. Andersen and Linda H. Cady exchanged marriage vows the evening of Friday, November 29, 2013 in Pahrump Nevada. The couple lives in Sun City, Las Vegas, Nevada.

Two of Olava Lee’s great great grandchildren graduated from college recently: Jeffrey Twesme from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with a degree in criminal justice and Jessica Pusateri from Loyola University, Chicago with a degree in nursing.

Welcome new members of the Olava Branch! Scarlett Alida Lee 8 lbs 1 oz, born September 29<sup>th</sup> 2013 to Per and Kaydee Lee, of Minnetonka, MN. Abigail Clarice Johnson was born, October 19, 2012 to Allan and Allen Johnson.

Jim Bessey retired 2012, however, he is back working again, as Interim Paster at Thousand Oaks Holy Trinity Lutheran Church. We know he likes to stay busy!!

After the passing of The Benrud Family's oldest living relative, Arvid Leighton Lee on February, 18, 2012 that role was assumed by his dear sister Clarice Elaine Lee Bessey of Ca. We are excited to wish Clarice a very Happy 97<sup>th</sup> Birthday !!! She is well and thriving, living with

her daughter Elaine and Gary. Clarice was born September 21, 1916 being the 7th and final child born to Leonard and Clara Lee. We love and celebrate you Clarice!!!



Vernon Lee, Clarice Bessey and Arvid Lee at the 1995 Benrud Family Reunion.

CARL BRANCH



Matt Swanson, the son of Wayne and Carolyn Swanson, spent the month of July in China. He traveled with Royal Servants, a short term missions and discipleship training organization headquartered in Minneapolis, MN.

CARL BRANCH (continued)

Marlin and Oryen Benrud celebrated their 50th Anniversary on June 15th 2013.

Rachel Benrud and Katie Strand graduated from Kenyon-Wanamingo High School in June. They are both attending the Association Free Lutheran Bible School in Minneapolis.

Andy Strand graduated in May from the Association Free Lutheran Bible School and is now attending North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton. He is majoring in farm management.



Grace Benson Finley, 99, died Thursday, January 2, 2014, at St. Brigid’s at Hi-Park. She was preceded in death by husband, Willard Benson in 1965 and husband, Ralph Finley in 1999. She is survived by her daughters, Barbara (Gerald) Strom of Red Wing and Beverly (Robert) Spille of Arizona; 6 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren. A memorial service will be held for Grace at a later date this spring,



Merlin Gerald Rostad, Died on Sunday, August 11, 2013. He was 100 years old and it was his 80th wedding anniversary.

Merlin is survived by his children, Richard Rostad (Kathleen Houseman), Penelope Rostad, Susan Weil (Randy), five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren.



Erik Benrud has spent the last year teaching in China. This photo and the one above is from his recent trip to Shanghai. This is the lobby of the Peace Hotel built in the 1920s.